

Book Review

Church, W. T., & Springer, D. W. (Eds.) (2018). *Serving the stigmatized: Working within the incarcerated environment*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

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The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Approximately 2.2 million people are incarcerated in federal, state, and local prisons and jails. If individuals on parole or probation are included, the number jumps to more than 4.7 million people under government supervision. The public, in general, disdains this population, often labeling them “bad people.” The *person* is judged rather than the behavior. Individuals not only “do their time” for the crime, they continue “doing time” after being released, due in part to public attitude. Previously incarcerated people have difficulty accessing housing, educational opportunities, and employment. In addition, they lose voting rights in some states. The sad fact is that the majority of incarcerated people are not that different from everyone else. They got off track and were never able to get back on the prosocial path. The social inequality experienced in our criminal justice system and in our society in general, makes escaping a negative environment challenging. Obviously, not everyone serving time can become a law-abiding citizen—but many can. When society supports rehabilitation, incarcerated individuals can become productive citizens. *Serving the Stigmatized* addresses the general needs of incarcerated individuals and the unique needs of individual offenders in prison and after release. Once society stigmatizes additional characteristics and traits shared by subgroups, incarcerated people become doubly stigmatized. In order for rehabilitation to be successful, the more specific needs must be addressed.

Instead of viewing incarcerated people as an aggregate of like people, programs and policies could lead to breaking the revolving-prison-door pattern by addressing specific characteristics of individuals. Each chapter of *Serving the Stigmatized* focuses on the difficulties and the solutions to problems of these unique subgroups. The case study at the end of each chapter is especially informative. Each study allows the reader to appreciate the hurdles incarcerated individuals experience as they find their way in our diverse society.

Chapter 1 is an example of the more individualized approach found in *Serving the Stigmatized*. It addresses the need for additional and more effective treatment of incarcerated individuals with mental illnesses. Armstrong, Winters, and Jagers report in Chapter 1, that more than half of all incarcerated individuals have a diagnosable mental illness, compared to 11% of the general population. If this statistic is valid, effective treatment of mental illness among prison populations could make a difference in crime rates.

Unfortunately, the problem isn't just one of mental illness. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, major depressive disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are all found in prison populations. Some scholarly studies indicate PTSD, linked to childhood trauma, is the most prevalent disorder, affecting as many as 90% of inmates (Chapter 1). Sadly, only 17.5% of these inmates receive medication, and only 7%

receive counseling (Chapter 1). Providing adequate treatment for all incarcerated people who need it can improve society by assisting ex-offenders to transform into law-abiding citizens.

Many inmates have not only diagnosable mental illnesses, but also coexisting substance disorders that require treatment (Chapter 8). Health-related problems such as HIV/AIDS (Chapter 4), health-care concerns related to aging (Chapter 5), and terminal illness (Chapter 15), are issues that necessitate specific treatment. Groups with special needs also need to be addressed, such as incarcerated parents (Chapter 6), LGBTQ individuals (Chapter 9), trans people (Chapter 10), specific races and ethnic groups (Chapter 11), immigrants (Chapter 14), and veterans (Chapter 13). Society labels these and other subgroups, making reentry to conventional society even more arduous. Specific ongoing programming, from prison through reentry, as discussed in *Serving the Stigmatized*, could produce positive outcomes for incarcerated people while lowering recidivism and crime rates.

Serving the Stigmatized is a well-written book that addresses high rates of incarceration in the United States. A better understanding of this population among practitioners and the general public could lead to more effective policies and programs, which would benefit incarcerated people and our society as a whole.